SEVERAL

INSTANCES

OF THE

WRONGS and OPPRESSIONS

Suffered by the

Sailers of the Engliſh Navy,

FROM

The beginning of the Late WAR: Moſt humbly preſented to the Fountain of Juſtice, the Parliament of ENGLAND.

IT is the Misfortune of the poor Sailers of the Engliſh-Navy, to have few or no Friends to take their Part, or repreſent their Grievances to the Parliament, in order to have them Redreſs'd: Juſtice indeed carries an equal Ballance, but both the Scales hang over the Earth, without any reſpect to the Sea. Tho' our Sailers are as true to their Country as the Needle of their Compaſs is to the Courſe they Steer, as faithful as the Steel to the Loadſtone; yet are they little minded by thoſe in whoſe Power it is to do them Juſtice, as if their Generation were Monſtrous, becauſe their lives are Amphibious; are born on the Land, and do Service on the Water, yet have common Juſtice on neither: They are *Engliſh-men* but till they are 16 or 18 Years of Age, then arrived to the *Ne plus ultra* of thier Liberty, their Freedom being in perpetual danger, liable to be invaded by every Preſs-Maſter; and thoſe which were born to the Rights and Immunities of an *Engliſh-man*, has all his Property knock'd on the head at once, and hawl'd away and conſtraint on board Ship, an Honourable ſort of Vaſſalage. Thus Wives have their Husbands torn from their Arms, Mothers the only hopes of their Families forc'd into Confinement more durable and uneaſy than that of their Wombs, Fathers and Sons Impriſoned in one Wooden Goal. But were this all, the Bondage would ſeem more eaſy; the Mariners never think their Service to their Country too much, they plough the wide Ocean, contend with the raging Billows of the Deep; and with a Bravery peculier to the Sons of the Sea, meet and fight their Enemy with a wonderful Contentment and Alacrity, in defence of their Country, and thoſe Rights and Privileges of which they have ſo ſmall a ſhare. Indeed their Country has not been backward in making a Generous Allowance ſuitable to the Bravery of Men engag'd in ſuch dangerous Enterprizes; but their ill Stars have laid them under ſuch diſmal Circumſtances, under ſuch a monſtrous and unparallel'd Conduct, that in the midſt of the Plenty provided for them, they have been in the greateſt Wants. It is commonly obſerv'd in dealings amongſt Mankind that the Service of Labourers require preſent Mony, and the Laws of the Realm have a great reſpect to the Wages of Servants, allowing them to be firſt paid, even before Bonds, or any previous Obligations of a contrary nature: But ſome wou'd have every Sailer an Exlex, and would make us believe that the ſame decorum of Juſtice is not to be us'd in States and Governments, as is practiſed amongſt Men of inferior Ranks and Qualities: However, as the Debts to the Sailers are National, it oughtto be a National Concern; and Grievances of this kind being Un-redreſs'd, may procure a National Judgment.

That the *Q*'s and *R*'s upon the Navy-Books, are a common Grievance to the poor Widows of Sailers, and their Attorneys will loudly juſtifie to their great Grief and Loſs.

The *R*, upon the Navy-Books is an immovable Letter, very ſignificant of Injuſtice, and ſerves there as a Period in other Books, putting a full ſtop to the Sailors Pay; and tho the Perſon that ſets the permanent *R*, may be but a Cypher himſelf in the account of Juſtice and true Worth, yet his Letter *R*, is productive of vaſt Sums of Mony into the Pocket of ſome Body or other, to the Ruin of the Seamen. This *R*, in Navy Language or Character (which you pleaſe) ſignifies *Run*, and this Run is of different Meaning and Signification too, it is Crambo'd and tortur'd moſt damnably, forc'd to expreſs the meaning of any thing the Commanders of the Navy pleaſe.

If a poor Man be ſet Sick a Shoar, ſo that he cannot get a Board his Ship before ſhe Sails, then he is made Run upon the Books. If he be a Shoar by the Captain's Order about the Ship's Buſineſs, and ſome Orders from Above force the Ship out of Harbour before he can get a Board; the Ship runs away from him, and he from the Ship at the

ſame time; if he go immediately on Board another *Ship*, yet he is Run ſtill. The immovable *R*, of the Navy, is as fixt as the Law of the *Medes* and *Perſians*. If he make Intereſt at the Admiralty to get the *R* taken off, (for 'tis in the Power of thoſe Men you know to do mighty Wonders) why then his Petition comes out with this pretty Device at the bottom, read the 11*th* of *February* refuſ'd, *J. Burchett*.

But farther to diſcover the meaning of this ſignificant Letter *R*, I ſhall give an account how it is apply'd to the poor *Sailers* upon the Navy-Books.

I. Such as never deſign'd to deſert the *Service*, but being return'd from long Voyages, and their *Ships* being either in Port or Dock, have adventured to viſit their Friends, in order to provide themſelves with Apparel and other Neceſſaries, and perhaps have met with Preſs-Gangs belonging to other *Ships*, and forc'd on Board; this has been eſteemed by the Navy a Deſertion, and they have made ſuch *Sailers Run*, upon their Books.

II. Thoſe that have been turn'd over from one *Ship* to another, and after having ſerv'd ſome time in the latter, their Tickets for their ſervice in the former *Ships* have been deliver'd them, and after having ſerv'd on Board ſeveral other *Ships*, perhaps two or three Years after being ſet *Sick a Shoar*, the firſt Tickets with the reſt, have been made *Quæri'd* or *Run*, and their Wages Forfeited.

Now, that ſuch Practices as theſe are contrary to all the Law, Juſtice and Reaſon in the World, is demonſtrable.

I. Such as have their Tickets given them, are ſuppos'd to be guilty of no Crime at that Juncture; and ſuch Tickets are and have been eſteemed as the King's Bonds and Bills of Exchange, and were formerly paid upon Sight. Now, it is very hard, That a Sailer tranſgreſſing in one *Ship*, ſhould become ſo guilty, as by that Crime to forfeit all his Wages in former *Ships*: So that good *Service* and bad, according to Navy Juſtice, are alike Puniſhable.

II. Many well-affected People to His Majeſty's *Service*, and out of Charity to their diſtreſſed Neighbours, have ſupplied many *Sailers* with Mony to the full value of their Tickets, and when they come to the Navy to be paid, receive nothing but an *R*, for their Mony.

III. The Quærying and Running of ſuch Tickets, have abominably leſſen'd the Credit of the Navy in reſpect of Wages, and made the moſt Glorious Navy in the World, the moſt Scandalous by ſuch barbarous Abuſes, inſomuch that Tickets formerly ſold at 2*s.* 6 *d. per* Pound, are now Sold for Seven, Eight, Ten and Twelve Shillings loſs.

The next thing to be Conſider'd is the Letter *Q*. upon the Navy Books, which ſtands there as near Injuſtice, as it does to the Letter *R* in the Alphabet. This *Q* is generally put upon ſuch as are ſet ſick a Shoar. And then the poor Sailer is to quary for Juſtice, which he may do till he is Blind, and never find it. That this Practice is Barbarous and Inhuman, is very evident.

I. It ſinks the Labourers Hire into private Pockets, deprives diſtreſſed Families of their Bread, purchaſed by the hazard of human Life, and brings unneceſſary charge upon Pariſhes.

II. This Q is a new Letter in the Navy Books, Quaries being never heard of till the Year 1690. before which time, every Man ſet ſick a Shoar had his Wages paid him, and was diſcharged from the Service.

III. The great Sickneſs which at and ſince that time happen'd in the Fleet, was the Foundation of theſe Quaries; a very hard Caſe, that a Sailer muſt loſe his Money becauſe he has loſt his Health in the Service; muſt have bad Pay, becauſe he has been poyſon'd with bad Proviſions.

IV. Many, if not moſt of thoſe, who have been ſet ſick a Shoar, have thought themſelves Diſcharg'd, according to former Cuſtom, being altogether ignorant of the new Practice of the Navy.

V. Many that have been long Voyages, and ſick for many Months together, ſeeing the Major part of the Ship's Crew Bury'd, have been thereby deſhearten'd to go a board Ship again, Diſeaſes being more dreadful to Sailers than Battle or Storm.

VI. Nor can it be rationally expected, that ſuch as have contracted Indiſpoſitions and Diſtempers, by unwholſom Proviſions, or a contagious Air, ſhould (after a Month's Refreſhment in ſick Quarters, or labouring 6 or 12 Months under their Maladies in an Hoſpital) be fit to return aboard Ship, or be capable of doing His Majeſty ſervice; but the contrary is evident, by the vaſt numbers that died ſoon after their return on Board, as well as thoſe that were ſet ſick a Shoar.

And wou'd it not now be juſt to pay ſuch Men their Wages? Wou'd it not be for the Honour of His Majeſty, for the Reputation and Credit of the Navy to conſider their Caſes and pay the Debts due from the Nation to ſuch?

1. *As have been ſet Sick on Shoar ſince the concluſion of the Peace.*
2. *To the Executors and Attorneys of ſuch as died in Sick Quarters, Hoſpitals or Hoſpital Ships.*

3. *To*

3. *To ſuch as after Recovery entred on Board any of his Majeſty's Ships.*
4. *To ſuch as have been Wounded or hurt, and receiv'd Penſions, or Smart-Money for the ſame.*
5. *To ſuch as continued Six Months, or upwards, in Sick Quarters or Hoſpitals, or have been diſcharged from thence as Incurable.*
6. *To ſuch as the Captains of Ships have diſcharged by Tickets, as unſerviceable, as being either Sick, Lame or Blind,* &c.

This Uſage of free born Engliſhmen, might move Compaſſion in any but in thoſe whoſe Buſineſs it is to cheat them, and raiſe their own Fortunes out of their Ruins. This indeed is a miſerable Scene of humane Cruelty, unknown to the Heathen Nations, and yet practiſed in a Chriſtian Country, built on the Pillars of good and wholſom Laws, and under a Government for no other reaſon that I know, but on purpoſe to deſtroy ſuch Arbitrary Proceedings, and to diſpenſe common Juſtice to all Men. There is little more difference betwixt a Gally Slave and an Engliſh Sailer, than that one ſerves in expectation of Pay, and the other without it; yet one is ſometimes as well paid as the other. This barbarous uſage of Mariners, have made them inſtead of deſerting our Ships of War, and taking Merchants Service, forſake their Country, and Sailwith Foreigners in hopes of better Juſtice and Uſage, abroad than they have met with at home. This barbarous Uſage has made many Thouſands of them turn Pirates during the laſt War; and thoſe that turn Free-booters are generally the Flower and Youth of the Seamen, ſo that in time our Ships ſhall be Man'd only with decrepit old Age, and the refuſe of the Sea, to the weakening of the Nation and Government; for every Sailer loſt is a Stone taken out of our National Walls, which ſuffering ſuch continual Dilapidations, will at laſt tumble down, and leave us expoſed to the Inſults of any Invader.

And after all, Pray what is become of the Money that was ordered to pay the Seamen, upon whom the *R*'s and *Q*'s have been put? If it remains ſtill in the Kings Hands, there is yet ſome hopes of Relief left to the miſerable Sailers; but if it be otherwiſe diſpoſed of, their Diſeaſe ſeems Incurable. When we look into the Pay-Office and ſee there ſome Clerks at 30*l. per Annum* purchaſing Eſtates, others turning Merchants, and employing vaſt Sums of Money in Trade, we may give a ſhrewd Gueſs what is become of the Poor Sailers Money. And how ſhall their Creditors be paid? How ſhall their Widows and numerous Fatherleſs Children be provided for? Will not the charge to the ſeveral Pariſhes, upon this account, be heavier upon the Subject than the Taxes during the War.

Dwelling ſo long upon the *R*'s, and *Q*'s, which to me appear like Figures in Sorcery; for the Projectors of their meaning in Navy Dialect have plac'd them backwards, as Witches ſay their Prayers: I had almoſt forgot the Injuries daily committed to thoſe Sailers who have chearfully Regiſtred themſelves, to be the more ready upon all occaſions to ſerve their Country, the Parliament has ſettled on every one of them Forty Shillings a Year for their Encouragement; and laſt Year the Officers of that Regiſtry have receiv'd 80000*l.* to pay off thoſe Tickets, out of which they have only diſtributed 35000*l.* and refuſe to pay one Farthing more, pretending they have not Money, ſo that Forty five thouſand Pounds is ſunk unaccountably into ſome bodies Pocket.

All theſe things are worthy the Conſideration of our Repreſentatives in Parliament, who are the only Perſons can redreſs Grievances of this nature.

Now for ſome ſhort Account of the Regiſter-Office and conclude; there were mighty things promis'd from this Office, and truly had it been well founded and managed, it might have been of very good Service to the Nation; for 'tis more then time, ſome meaſures ſhould have been taken to retrieve our ſinking Navy; but this being contriv'd govern'd by the Projectors, who ſeem rather by their Carriage to ruine or drive all the Seamen out of the Kingdom, than to encourage and keep them here, has had the contrary effect expected by Parliament, that made a large Proviſion for this Office, and made a Calculation of 30000 Seamen to be Regiſtred, now of theſe 30000 there is about 15000 Thouſand Regiſtred, which moſt of them Regiſtred themſelves a-Board of Ship before the Concluſion of the Peace, being chiefly threatn'd and compel'd to it; but ſince the Peace there have been a very inconſiderable number have Regiſtred, and one may believe now the Regiſter-Office may ſit down contented, and ſave the charge it puts the Kingdom to for any more Men of any ſort that will Regiſter themſelves. But now to ſhew what may be depended upon from thoſe already Regiſtred, half of them are Officers who are forc'd to do it, or otherwiſe loſe their Employments; but as they have not the 40*s.* a Year, provided for every Seaman by the Act, ſo they are not oblig'd to ſurrender themſelves to the Service, but they were only compell'd to Regiſter themſelves, not for any uſe they were that way to the Kingdom, but for Encouragement to the Seamen, or to wheedle them to follow their Example. A moiety of this remaining 7000 are Land Men or wretched Creatures taken or Preſt into the Service, more to make up

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the Complement, and rather peſter a Ship, when Seamen could not be got: above half the remainder, which we will ſuppoſe to be Seamen, are at Sea in Merchants ſervice on Foreign Voyages, the Act obliging none to ſtay at home to wait a Call; ſo that in fine, by a modeſt Calculation, the Nation in the utmoſt Exigency cannot rely upon the Regiſter-Office for Two thouſand able Seamen of the 30000 which was expected in ſix Months time: But to give ſome Particulars how this Office is a Diſcouragement, or rather an Oppreſſion in many Reſpects to Seamen than an Encouragement, as was promis'd to the Parliament when 'twas Eſtabliſh'd by Law, at a great charge to the Nation.

1. The Seaman that Regiſtred himſelf was promis'd by the Act, 40 *s. per Annum*, which is a great deal in a poor Seaman's Pocket, and Eſtimates given every Seſſion to the Parliament yearly of this particular Charge, and if I miſtake not, Fonds rais'd and receiv'd for this uſe: Now the Seamen have never receiv'd a Farthing of this; but on the contrary, the Seaman is glad to ſell his Regiſter Ticket for 10 *s.* in the Pound, which every Body will not give, for to my knowledge, People that have made enquiry at the Regiſter-Office how, and when theſe Tickets would be paid, 'twas anſwer'd, 'twas not yet determin'd, nor did they believe ever would; an excellent Encouragement to Seamen; but to help out the matter, here is a Tax levy'd upon every Seaman in *England* of 6 Pence *per Menſem*, toward the ſupport of this Eſtabliſhment, which I never heard any Seaman the better for: Again, the Act ſays, the King's Ships ſhall be Man'd with Regiſtred Seamen: they to have the Preference, and out of them only are the inferiour Officers to be made; now ſeveral Captains have been put to a Plaguy puzzle on this account, for by reaſon of the diſcouragements before mentioned, very few good Seamen have Regiſtred themſelves, ſo that a Captain cannot find enough, or ſufficient out of his Regiſtred Men to make Officers of.

There might be a great deal more ſaid of the ill Uſage of theſe poor Creatures; but to avoid prolixity I ſhall omit it now, and humbly hope this already ſaid, may be worth the Conſideration of the Supreme Judicature; it being deſign'd to no other end, than that in doing Juſtice, and ſhewing Mercy to theſe poor People, it may at laſt turn to be of the greateſt ſervice to the Nation.

GERRALD BYRNE,

A lover of the King and Country.

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